

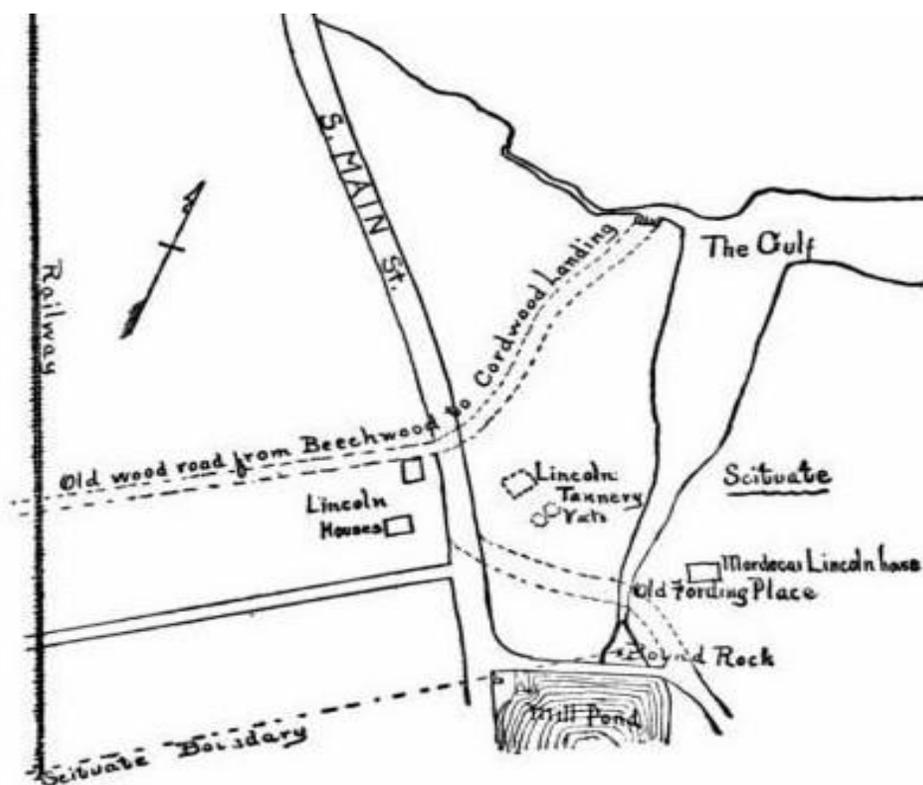
LINCOLN MILL HISTORY

Below is a summary of what I know about the Lincoln mills. The last of these structures stands on property we own.

Early Years

In the very late 1600s an impoundment later known as Hunter's Pond or the Mordecai Lincoln Road Pond was created by constructing a dam at the mouth of Bound Brook. The current mill structure was built next to this pond. The mill site straddles the patent line agreed upon in 1639 as the boundary between the former Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colonies. South of the line is the Town of Scituate, founded in 1636. North is the Town of Cohasset. Cohasset was settled in 1670, though it was formerly part of Hingham. It became a separate town in 1770 and was part of Suffolk County until 1793 when it became part of Norfolk County.

Prior to 1695 there was no dam or road over Bound Brook. Instead a little distance downstream from the current road location, at a point pushing into the Gulph River estuary, people forded back and forth between Scituate and Beechwood. See the map below.



PLAN SHOWING SOME POINTS OF INTEREST AT THE SOUTHERN BOUNDARY OF THE TOWN.

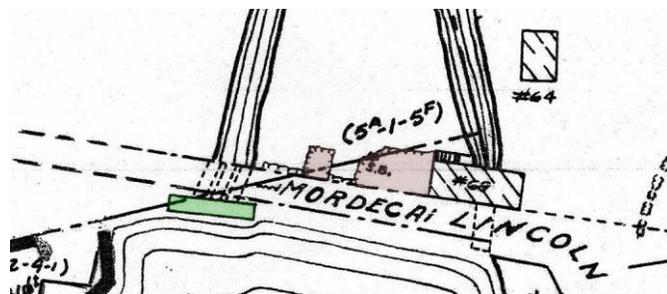
From *A Narrative History of the Town of Cohasset, Massachusetts* by Edwin Victor Bigelow

Original Mills and Dam

In 1695 Mordecai Lincoln (blacksmith by trade and the great-great-great grandfather of Abraham Lincoln) built a house on the road fording the stream. He also built a series of mills, but weak water flow from Bound Brook was a problem. The flow was only sufficient to pond water for a couple of days of operation at any one spot. He therefore constructed a saw mill and grist mill at the mouth of the brook, another operation farther upstream, and a third toward the source of the brook near Lily Pond in Cohasset. By staging the collection of water behind a dam at each of the three sites, he ran one operation for two days, moved to next site for two days, and then to the third for two days. (He did not operate on Sunday.) Each of the mills needed wagon access, and at the Hunter's Pond site the dam served as support for a new road in front of the buildings. The new road provided a much better connection between Scituate and Cohasset, replacing the undoubtedly awkward fording arrangement limited to low tide crossings. Until the 1920s the road was known as Blossom Street. It is now Mordecai Lincoln Road.

Original Stream Channels and Mill Placements

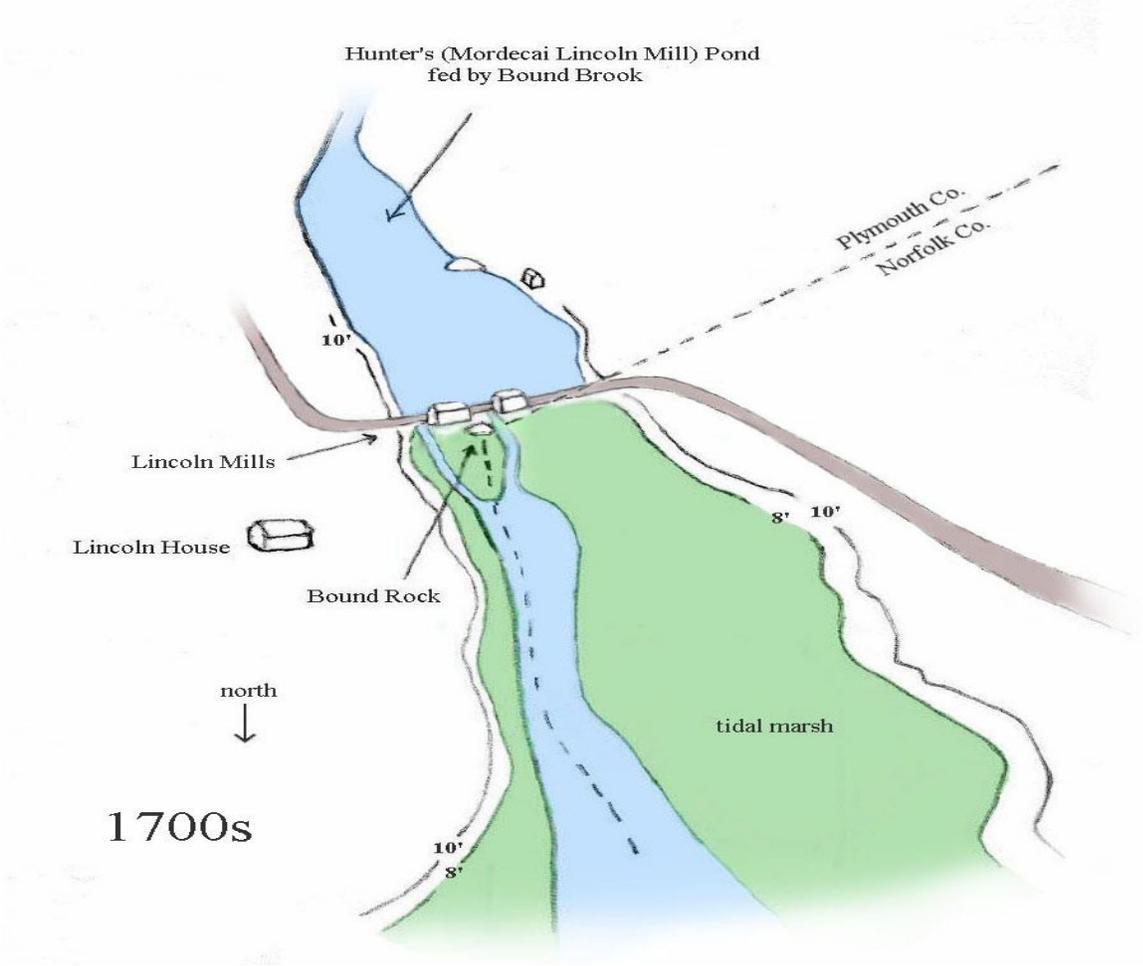
The few historical maps depicting the Bound Brook vicinity show the stream below Hunter's Pond forming two channels: one where the channel runs under the current mill structure and the other running from the center of the pond. (Curiously, the current town/county boundaries follow the easterly channel lying under the current mill structure. Historic evidence, however, would place the boundary at the westerly channel, pivoting from an east/west direction northward at the obelisk atop the former landmark, Bound Rock. Today's channel farther west, running below the recently removed concrete dam site (shown in green below), does not appear on these maps. Sheet 5A of the Scituate Assessor's Atlas shows two rectangular dotted patterns (shaded here in violet) to the immediate west of the current mill structure. These represent the foundations of additional, earlier mill structures.



What was once the westerly of the two original channels appears to have run in the gap between the foundations of these mill structures. That channel has been abandoned, but its remnants can be seen in the lower center portion of the Live Local bird's eye view image below.



The early mills would have used vertical water wheels. A specific stream channel would have been used for the wheels; a separate one for controlling the height of the pond.

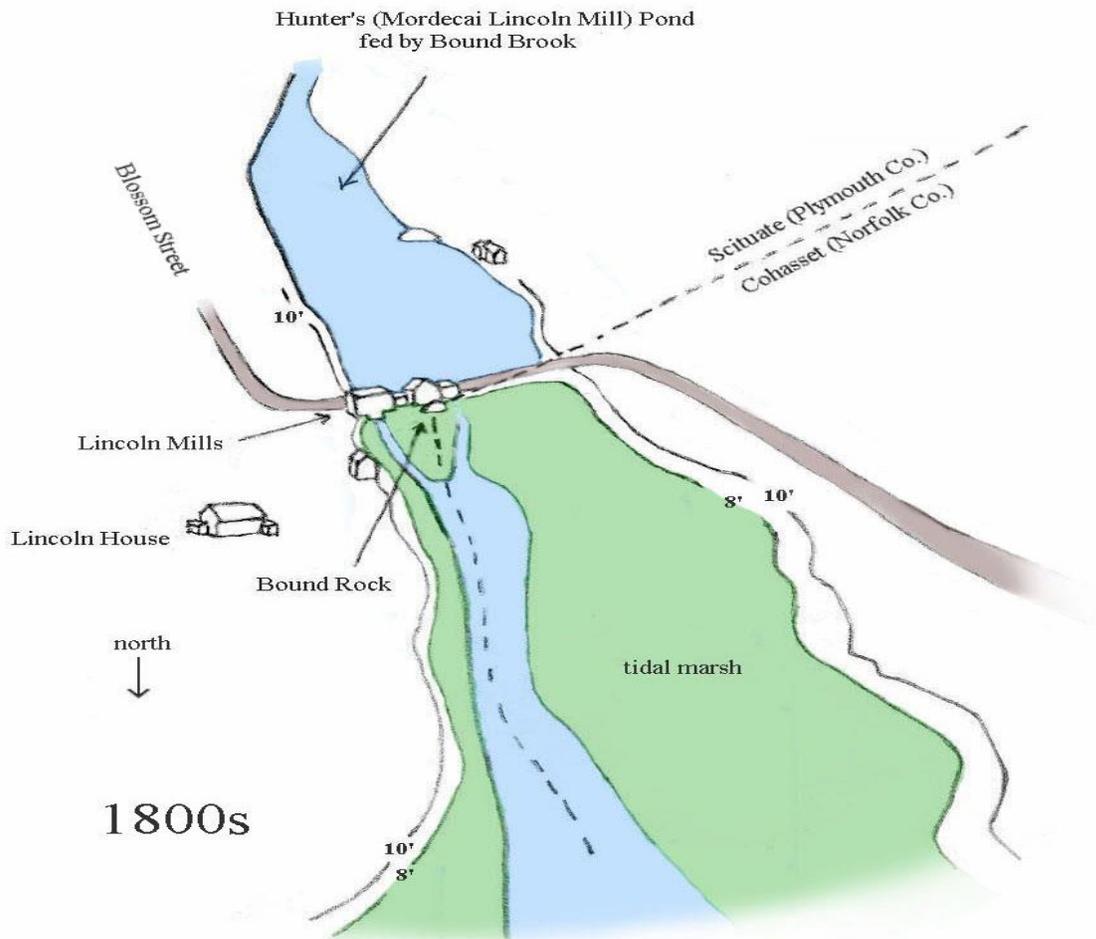


End of First Mill Period

The first mills existed until sometime between 1810 and 1813, about the time Caleb Lincoln, an heir to Mordecai, sold the land where the mills stood to parties outside the family. The main property with the Lincoln “mansion” house was a separate parcel passed on to different parties.

Change in Mill Technology

What happened immediately after 1813 with respect to mill operations is unclear, but at some time in the mid 1800s new mills were constructed (or at least the remnants of the earlier mills were reconstructed.) This can be seen in the machined studs and joists of the current building. The grist mill, the current building, sitting above the easterly channel, now had a horizontal turbine beneath it, instead of a vertical water wheel. A turbine would have been much more efficient given the weak water flow and could have operated in the winter taking water from under the ice-covered pond. (The turbine, mill stones, and other machinery were removed before my parents acquired the property. According to a statement given to my parents, the former mill had been used as a storage barn by John Cornett who acquired the property in 1922. Some of the mill stones now form a stairway on the north side of the building down to the water.)



Recent Mills

In 1882 the mills were transferred to new parties. A picture allegedly from 1921 (see below) shows an additional building and shed next to, to the left of, today's remaining structure. These extra buildings were gone soon after the picture was taken and are not referred to in Cornett's statement about the property.



Last Mill Operation

The last vestige of mill operation occurred from about 1905 to 1922. A party named Hans Dick financed three partners, for \$2500 each, to run an enterprise called the Lincoln Mill Grain and Feed Company. After setting up the business Dick set off for Europe. Upon returning he found the business to be insolvent and proceeded to terminate the company to recoup his investment. The process ended with transfer of the property to John Cornett.

In 1936 the Town made the agreement with Cornett regarding the sluice gate and alterations of the channel under the mill. The central channel from the pond may have ceased to function with the demise of the grain and feed company or even earlier.

Haunted Mill

Stories persist that the remaining mill structure is haunted by the ghost of a young girl who drowned in Hunter's Pond long ago. Passersby have reported seeing the ghost appearing in the mill's upper story windows. There are also accounts on web sites of the mill being haunted. One clip shows paranormal investigators searching the site for signs of other worldly activities. Not much if anything, though, was ever said about the haunting when my parents were living, but maybe the internet and social media have generated the greater current interest. One fact, though, is certain. Raccoons in recent years have entered the mill and have become trapped inside, pawing at the windows in attempts to escape. (Hopefully our efforts to keep the animals out are now working.)

Recent Ownership

In 1957 my mother and father acquired the Lincoln property. The legal description of the portion where the current mill structure stands is of a roughly one-quarter acre parcel. In the description there is a phrase that has caused some confusion. It reads that the parcel is to be taken "together with the machinery, dam, water privileges and other appurtenances thereto belonging." That part of the deed is copied below.

We, John Wilber Lowes and Emily Ellsworth Ford Lowes, husband and wife, tenants
~~of~~ by the entirety, of Scituate, Plymouth County, Massachusetts
being ~~un~~married, for consideration paid, grant to
Donald B. Ladd and Marjorie T. Ladd, married to each other, as tenants
by the entirety, both
of said Scituate with quitclaim covenants
Three certain parcels of land situated in Scituate, Plymouth County, Massachusetts,
~~Scituate~~ and Cohasset, Norfolk County, Massachusetts, being bounded and described as
follows: [Redacted]
Parcel 1 The land in said Scituate being a certain lot of land with the buildings
thereon situated partly in said Scituate and partly in said Cohasset, known as
"Lincoln's Mills", containing one-fourth of an acre, more or less, bounded Northerly
by the brook or stream; Easterly by land of Langdon W. Cook; Southerly by the road or
dam; and Westerly by land now or late of George H. Briggs, together with the machinery,
dam, water privileges and other appurtenances thereto belonging not including the ice
house situated on the South side of said road or dam in the pond.

The "appurtenances" phrase in the deed description is tantamount to an easement. It does not convey any land per se. The phrase originates at least as far back as 1882 (note the hand written copy below) and clearly was set forth to encompass things (appurtenances) essential to milling: such as raceways for water wheels and channels to control pond levels.

Know all men by these presents

that I, Georg Hermon Briggs of Cohasset, in the County
of Norfolk, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts

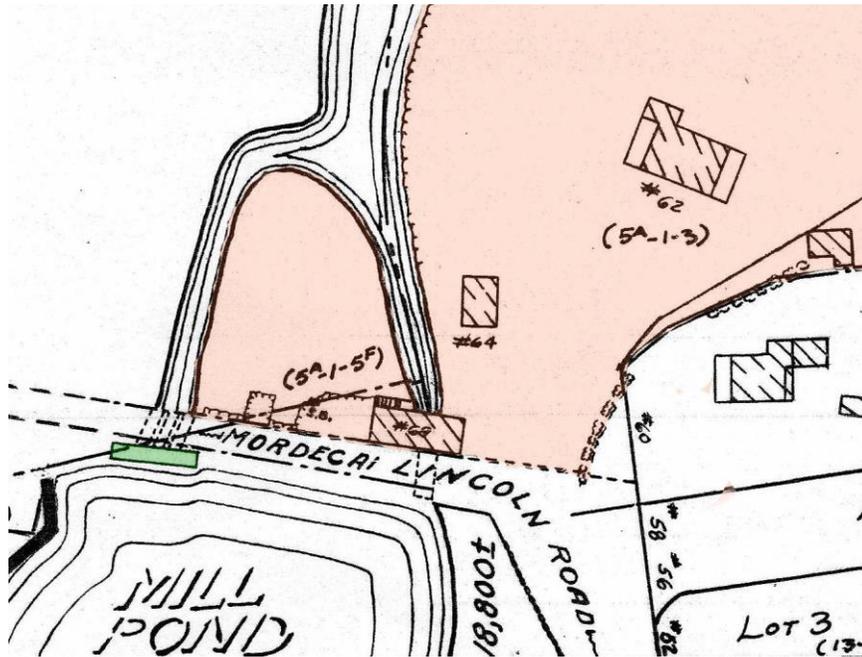
in consideration of fifteen hundred dollars to me
paid by John H. Litchfield, and John H. Litchfield Jr. of
Dunier, in said County of Norfolk

the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, do hereby give, grant, bargain, sell, and convey unto the said
John H. Litchfield and John H. Litchfield Jr. a certain lot
of land with the building thereon situated partly in
Scituate, in the County of Plymouth, in said Commonwealth,
and partly in said Cohasset, formerly known as "Lincoln's
Mills," containing one fourth of an acre, more or less, bounded
Northernly by the brook or stream; Easternly by land of
Langdon W. Cook; Southernly by the road or dam, and
Westernly by the land of the grantor. Together with the ma-
chinery, dams, water privilege and other appurtenances
thereto belonging, ^{not including} the ice house situated on
the South side of said road or dam, of the first

Relationship of the Deed to Earlier Dams

A close look at the 1882 and 1957 wording of the appurtenances phrase shows a reversal singulars and plurals, where "dam" is "dams" and "water privileges" is "water privilege." The reversal appears to have happened when Hans Dick dispensed with the property, and it has caused confusion about which dam or dams are referred to. Some have thought the just recently removed concrete dam was the subject of the deed description. That, however, would conflict with the history of the dams and the principle interest in milling operations. The recently removed dam was a modern dam and never had any functional relationship with a mill operation.

The Modern Dam and Related Channel



The modern dam and fish ladders (again shown in green above and separate from our property shown in salmon color) were not in existence when the appurtenances phrase was originated and likely never existed at any time during mill operations. Inasmuch as the structure constructed by Mordecai Lincoln to create Hunter's Pond is certainly a dam with a road on top, it would not have been within the scope of the appurtenances, rights, and machinery relevant to the property interests. The important appurtenances were the operational weirs or gates ("dams" so called in earlier parlances). Note that the "road or dam" (today maintained by the town) is separately referred to in the deed descriptions as a southerly boundary to the property.

The modern dam could never have been within the scope of the "appurtenances" phrase because of its lack of any relationship with milling. It was built in conjunction with the adjacent fish ladders. It was a buttressed overflow dam made of reinforced, poured concrete and reflected a construction technology not in use until at least the late nineteenth century. Research into the Scituate archives has revealed a proposal for a "fishway" at this location as introduced in 1897, though no dam construction was authorized at the time. The actual construction came later, likely in the WPA era. According to federal archives WPA money was allocated in 1936 to Plymouth and other counties to "improve fisheries on coastal streams." That money was to be administered by the State and may have been the source of funds for this specific location. (Several archivists have said, though, that the specific project records would be difficult to find.)

As noted earlier the stream channel below the former dam and fish ladders is relatively recent. It is not the channel shown on early maps of the area. The west bank of the channel is formed by a retaining wall holding back fill four to five feet high. The fill area formed the foundation for a complex of factory structures that existed immediately before, during, and after World War Two.

(One of the uses was radar manufacturing). The time frame of the channel formation and retaining wall may be consistent with the WPA dam and fish ladder construction.

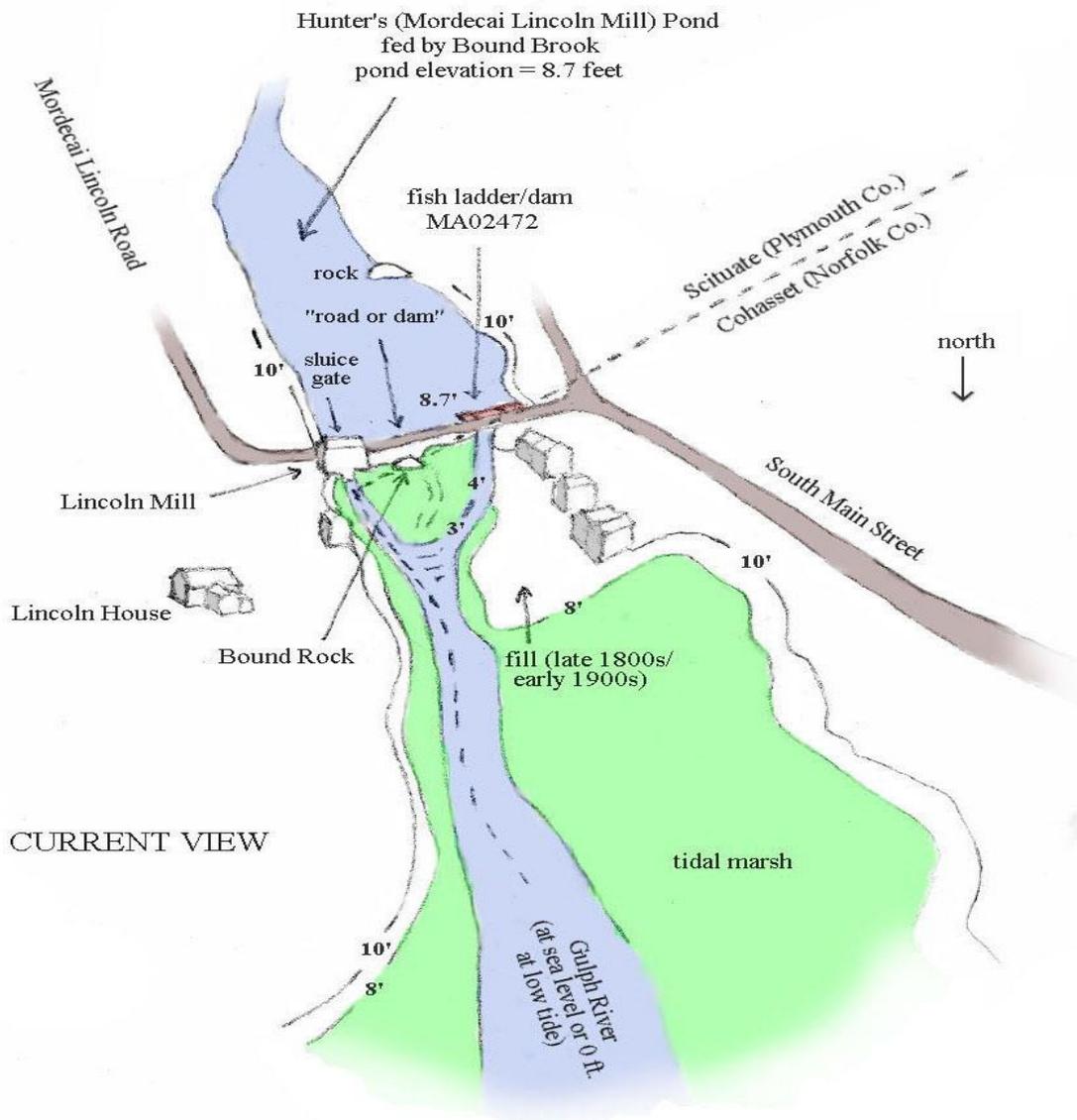


Removal of the Dam and Pond

Prior to taking down the modern dam and removing the pond as part of an international consortium's efforts to improve the northeast fisheries there was a concern on the part of the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety about downstream hazards if the structurally unsound dam failed. There were issues of engineering studies and responsibilities for maintenance. All of that is now a moot point since the dam is gone. But, the continued existence of the pond after milling ceased has an interesting footnote. It's clear from the discussions between Cornett and the town in the 30s that he wanted the pond maintained as an aesthetic feature. Arguably, though, his interest would only have been like that of any other abutting neighbor, because the cessation of milling and the inability of the remaining mill to operate meant that his possession of water privileges would have ceased. That point became evident with disputes about flooding affecting North Scituate merchants during the 1950s onward. The merchants cited a restrictive provision in the colonial authorization granted to Mordecai Lincoln that basically required a reversion of the pond to the original natural stream channel once milling ended. (How significant colonial

authorizations and restrictions would have been in recent times is open to question. Although this is a bit of a digression, it is interesting to note that very early in the game colonial authorities were claiming increasing prerogatives and autonomy - long before the Revolutionary War. A locally related example is the settlement of a dispute between the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies over the nearby marsh grass haying rights. Given the greater difficulty in clearing upland areas of trees for hay fields compared with assessing the marsh lands, marsh rights were aggressively fought over. In this case the matter was settled, so the story goes, directly between the colonies without recourse to the English courts. Presumably this was an early, if not the first, "Continental Congress.")

To round out the progression of changes over time the last illustration below shows the "Current View." Since as it was drawn before the pond removal, it shows the pond and structures before the dam was eliminated.



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